

## **Great Grandfathers**

By

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I have chosen to write about both of my great grandfathers together. Their lives are parallel to a large extent and their accomplishments and families were intertwined by choice and of necessity. They were products of life in the nineteenth century and are good examples of what enterprising people were able to achieve during that period. Both had sufficient drive to amass a reasonable estate and to do so under trying conditions. The fact that they overcame adversity and worked hard to achieve their place in the world is significant. Their lives have had a positive influence on much of their progeny.

Some details of their biographies are as follows: Jesse L. Smith was born on July 5, 1813 and died July 28, 1885 in Pitt County, NC. He had three wives, Absley Joyner, Nannie Cobb, and Martha Pippin. He had a total of twenty-one children, seventeen of whom were still living when he died. Archibald H. Flanekin (Flanagan) son of James Flanagan and Nancy was born on January 5, 1825 and died March 3, 1887 in Pitt County, NC. He married Mary Bell on July 5, 1853. They had six sons and four daughters. Both were born in the Farmville Township, a fitting name for an agricultural community.

Jesse was about eleven or twelve years older than Archibald and died about two years earlier than he did. Their homes were about three or four miles apart and three Smith children married three Flanagan children. It would be easy to visualize considerable traffic between the two homes even with travel by horse and buggy. It is interesting that in 1826, Jesse was 13 years old the day after Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died and that same year the Declaration of Independence had its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Archibald was about a year and a half old.

Much of the information included in this sketch is taken from "Chronicles of Pitt County", published by the Pitt County Historical Society in 1982. In that book, an article, Reminiscences of Beaver Dam, 1826, concerns Jesse and includes an article he wrote for the local paper in 1882. Beaver Dam Township is now known as Bell Arthur. Jesse was born to a family which was poor even by the standards of the day and owned no property. His father died while he was a small boy and he worked as a "ploughboy" for \$4.00 a month. In his late teens he was an overseer and made \$20.00 a month. He worked in the naval stores industry for a couple of years and was a peddler of goods in parts of Pitt, Greene and Wayne counties.

Jesse was a hard working person and an enterprising businessman. By carefully saving his wages, he was able to buy a small parcel of land on credit. Through hard work and a large family, he was able to accumulate land over his working career until by his death he had about 2000 acres "free and clear." A copy of the article he wrote and was published in the local paper is appended because of its excellent description of life and conditions in Beaver Dam in the years between 1826 and 1882.